# The TATLER.

By *Isaac Bickerstaff* Esq;

From *Thursday* October 27. to *Saturday* October 29. 1709.

*Will's Coffee-house, October.* 28.

THERE is nothing which I contemplate with greater Pleasure than the Dignity of human Nature, which often shows it self in all Conditions of Life: For notwithstanding the Degeneracy and Meanness that is crept into it, there are a Thousand Occasions in which it breaks through its Original Corruption, and shows what it once was, and what it will be hereafter. I consider the Soul of Man, as the Ruin of a glorious Pile of Building; where, amidst great Heaps of Rubbish, you meet with noble Fragments of Sculpture, broken Pillars and Obelisks, and a Magnificence in Confusion. Virtue and Wisdom are continually employ'd in clearing the Ruins, removing these disorderly Heaps, recovering the noble Pieces that lie buried under them, and adjusting 'em as well as possible according to their ancient Symmetry and Beauty. A happy Education, Conversation with the finest Spirits, looking abroad into the Works of Nature, and Observations upon Mankind, are the great Assistances to this necessary and glorious Work. But even among those who have never had the Happiness of any of these Advantages, there are sometimes such Exertions of the Greatness that is natural to the Mind of Man, as show Capacities and Abilities, which only want these accidental Helps to fetch 'em out, and show 'em in a proper Light. A Plebeian Soul is still the Ruin of this glorious Edifice, though encumber'd with all its Rubbish. This Reflection rose in me from a Letter which my Servant drop'd as he was dressing me, and which he told me was communicated to him as he is an Acquaintance of some of the Persons mentioned in it. The Epistle is from one Serjeant *Hall* of the Foot-Guards. It is directed, *To Serjeant* Cabe, *in the* Coldstream *Regiment of Foot Guards, at the* Red-Lettice *in the* Butcher-Row *near* Temple-Bar.

I was so pleas'd with several Touches in it, that I could not forbear shewing it to a Cluster of Criticks, who, instead of considering it in the Light I have done, examin'd it by the Rules of Epistolary Writing: For as these Gentlemen are seldom Men of any great Genius, they work altogether by Mechanical Rules, and are able to discover no Beauties that are not pointed out by *Bouhours* and *Rapin*. The Letter is as follows:

*Comrade,* *From the Camp before Mons, Sept.* 26.

'I Receiv'd Yours, and am glad your self and your Wife are in good Health, with all the rest of my Friends. Our Battalion suffer'd more than I could wish in the Action; but who can withstand Fate? Poor *Richard Stephenson* had his Fate with a great many more: He was kill'd dead before we enter'd the Trenches. We had above 200 of our Battalion kill'd and wounded: We lost 10 Serjeants; 6 are as follows: *Jennings, Castles, Roach, Sherring, Merrick*, and my Son *Shute*. The rest are not your Acquaintance. I have receiv'd a very bad Shot in my Head my self, but am in Hopes, and please God, I shall recover. I continue in the Field, and lie at my Colonel's Quarters. *Arthur* is very well; but I can give you no Account of *Elms*; he was in Hospital before I came into the Field. I will not pretend to give you an Account of the Battle, knowing you have a better in the Prints. Pray give my Service to Mrs. *Cook* and her Daughter, to Mr. *Stoffe* and his Wife, and to Mr. *Lyster*, and *Thomas Hagdon*, and to Mr. *Ragdell*, and to all my Friends and Acquaintance in general who do ask after me: My Love to Mrs. *Stephenson*. I am sorry for the sending such ill News. Her Husband was gathering a little Money together to send to his Wife, and put it into my Hands. I have Seven Shillings and Three Pence, which I shall take Care to send her; wishing your Wife a safe Delivery, and both of you all Happiness. Rest,

*Your assur'd Friend,*

*And Comrade,*

**John Hall.**

'We had but an indifferent Breakfast, but the Mounseers never had such a Dinner in all their Lives.

'My kind Love to my Comrade *Hinton*, and Mrs. *Morgan*, and to *John Brown* and his Wife. I sent Two Shillings, and *Stephenson* Sixpence, to drink with you at Mr. *Cook's*; but I have heard nothing from him. It was by Mr. *Edgar*.

'Corporal *Hartwell* desires to be remembred to you, and desires you to enquire of *Eagar*, what is become of his Wife *Pegg*; and when you write, to send Word in your Letter what Trade she drives.

'We have here very bad Weather, which I doubt will be a Hindrance to the Siege; but I am in Hopes we shall be Masters of the Town in a little Time, and then I believe we shall go to Garison.

I saw the Criticks prepar'd to nibble at my Letter; therefore examin'd it my self, partly in their Way, and partly my own. This is (said I) truly a *Letter*, and an honest Representation of that chearful Heart which accompanies the poor Soldier in his Warfare. Is not there in this all the Topick of submitting to our Destiny as well discuss'd, as if a greater Man had been placed, like *Brutus*, in his Tent at Midnight, reflecting on all the

the Occurrences of past Life, and saying fine Things on Being it self. What Serjeant *Hall* knows of the Matter, is, that he wisht there had not been so many kill'd, and he had himself a very bad Shot in the Head, and should recover if it pleas'd God. But be that as it will, he takes Care, like a Man of Honour, as he certainly is, to let the Widow *Stephenson* know, that he had Seven and Three Pence for her; and that if he lives, he is sure he shall go into Garison at last. I doubt not but all the good Company at the *Red-Lettice*, drank his Health with as much real Esteem as we do any of our Friends. All that I am concern'd for, is, that Mrs. *Peggy Hartwell* may be offended at showing this Letter, because her Conduct in Mr. *Hartwell*'s Absence is a little inquir'd into. But I could not sink that Circumstance, because you Criticks would have lost one of the Parts which I doubt not but you have much to say upon, Whether the Familiar Way is well hit in this Stile or not? As for my self, I take a very particular Satisfaction in seeing any Letter that is fit only for those to read who are concern'd in it, but especially on such a Subject: For if we consider the Heap of an Army, utterly out of all Prospect of Rising and Preferment, as they certainly are, and such great Things executed by them, it is hard to account for the Motive of their Gallantry. But to me, who was a Cadet at the Battle of *Coldstream* in *Scotland*, when *Monk* charg'd at the Head of the Regiment, now call'd *Coldstream* from the Victory of that Day; (I remember it as well as if it were Yesterday) I stood on the Left of old *West*, who I believe is now at *Chelsea*: I say, to me, who know very well this Part of Mankind, I take the Gallantry of private Soldiers to proceed from the same, it not from a nobler, Impulse than that of Gentlemen and Officers. They have the same Taste of being acceptable to their Friends, and go through the Difficulties of that Profession by the same irresistible Charm of Fellowship, and the Communication of Joys and Sorrows, which quickens the Relish of Pleasure, and abates the Anguish of Pain. Add to this, that they have the same Regard to Fame, tho' they do not expect so great a Share as Men above them hope for; but I'll engage, Serjeant *Hall* would die Ten Thousand Deaths, rather than a Word should be spoken at the *Red-Lettice*, or any Part of the *Butcher-Row*, in Prejudice to his Courage or Honesty. If you will have my Opinion then of the Serjeant's Letter, I pronounce the Stile to be mix'd, but truly epistolary; the Sentiment relating to his own Wound, is in the Sublime; the Postscript of *Pegg Hartwell*, in the gay; and the Whole, the Picture of the bravest Sort of Men, that is to say, a Man of great Courage, and small Hopes.

*From my own Apartment, October 28.*

When I came Home this Evening, I found, after many Attempts to vary my Thoughts, that my Head still ran upon the Subject of the Discourse to Night at *Will*'s. I fell therefore into the Amusement of proportioning the Glory of a Battle among the whole Army, and dividing it into Shares, according to the Method of the Million-Lottery. In this Bank of Fame, by an exact Calculation, and the Rules of Political Arithmetick, I have allotted Ten hundred thousand Shares; Five hundred thousand of which is the Due of the General, Two hundred thousand I assign to the General Officers, and Two hundred Thousand more to all the Commission'd Officers, from Colonels to Ensigns; the remaining Hundred Thousand must be distributed among the Non-Commission'd Officers, and private Men: According to which Computation, I find Serjeant *Hall* is to have one Share and a Fraction of two Fifths. When I was a Boy at *Oxford*, there was among the Antiquities near the Theatre a great Stone, on which were engraven the Names of all who fell in the Battle of *Marathon*. The generous and knowing People of *Athens* understood the Force of the Desire of Glory, and would not let the meanest Soldier perish in Oblivion. Were the natural Impulse of the *British* animated with such Monuments, What Man would be so mean, as not to hazard his Life for his Ten hundred Thousandth Part of the Honour in such a Day as that of *Blenheim* or *Blaregnies*.


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